



## ADA Facts

# TEACHING YOUR CHILD TO SAY 'NO'

In order to help your child refuse alcohol and other drugs, it is extremely important that parents communicate (both speak and listen) effectively with their children. Oftentimes parents hesitate to discuss alcohol and other drug use with their children. Some of us believe that our children couldn't become involved with illegal substances. Others delay because we don't know what to say or how to say it, or we are afraid of putting ideas into our children's heads.

### ▼ Talk to Your Children

Don't wait until you think your child has a problem. Many young people in treatment programs say that they had used alcohol and other drugs for at least two years before their parents knew about it. Begin early to talk about alcohol and other drugs, and remember to keep the lines of communication open.

Here are some basic hints for improving your ability to talk with your child about alcohol and other drugs:

**Be a good listener.** Make sure your child feels comfortable bringing problems or questions to you. Listen closely to what your child says. Be available to discuss even sensitive issues. If your child wants to discuss something at a time when you can't give it your full attention, explain why you can't talk, set a time to talk later, and then carry through on it.

**Give lots of praise.** Be sure to emphasize the things your youngster is doing right instead of always focusing on things that are wrong. When parents are quicker to praise than to criticize, children learn to feel good about themselves, and they develop the self-confidence to trust their own judgment.

**Give clear messages.** When talking about the use of alcohol and other drugs, be sure you give your child a clear no-use message, so that the child will know exactly what is expected. For example, "In our family we don't allow the use of illegal drugs, and children are not allowed to drink."

**Model good behavior.** Children learn by example as well as teaching. Make sure that your own actions reflect the standards of honesty, integrity, and fair play that you expect of your child.

Here are some steps that you can practice with your child to make it easier for the child to refuse an offer of alcohol and other drugs. Tell your child to:

**Ask Questions.** If unknown substances are offered, ask "What is it?" and

“Where did you get it?” If a party or other gathering is proposed, ask “Who else is coming?” “Where will it be?” “Will parents be there?”

**Say NO!** Don’t argue. Say no and show that you mean it.

**Give reasons.** “I’m doing something else that night” or “The coach says drugs will hurt my game” are examples of some reasons that youngsters can use.

**Suggest other things to do.** If a friend is offering alcohol or other drugs, saying no is tougher. Suggesting something else to do—going to a movie, playing a game, or working together on a project—shows that drugs are being rejected, not the friend.

**Leave.** When all these steps have been tried, get out of the situation immediately. Go home, go to class, join a group of friends, or talk to someone else.

Parents must give their children all the tools they need in order to make healthy choices—helping young people develop the necessary skills to refuse alcohol and other drugs is one of the most important lessons parents need to teach their children! It is important for all of us!



For more information,  
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